

issue. I encourage the rest of my colleagues to please join us in supporting the passage of the bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF RHEANNE WIRKKALA

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to ask unanimous consent for the confirmation of a highly qualified nominee standing ready to lead the greatest military the world has ever known.

As we speak, it is no secret that Vladimir Putin's unprovoked and deadly war is raging in Ukraine. Russia, along with China, Iran, North Korea, and other adversaries, is actively working to erode our national security and undermine democratic principles across the world.

Just last month, I had the opportunity to visit our troops stationed in Eastern Europe. I could not have been prouder of these brave American servicemembers who are at the tip of the spear protecting our democracy. They have literally dedicated their lives to defending our freedoms and the freedoms of our allies. These men and women need our support, and they are depending on us to do our part and confirm quality candidates to serve in strategic leadership roles.

With that in mind, I would ask to confirm Rheanne Wirkkala of Maryland as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs. This nominee's years of service at the Defense Intelligence Agency, as a senior staffer in the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and as a special assistant to the Secretary of Defense make her immensely qualified to serve in this position.

Our national security is critically important. It is a fundamental responsibility of this body, and we must take action to make sure we have the best people in the positions to defend our democracy and our national security.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 993; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and that the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Rheanne Wirkkala, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Wirkkala nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, since the real President, President Biden, was elected to office, the southern border—my State shares a 1,200-mile common border with Mexico—has been absolutely overwhelmed by the number of migrants entering the United States.

The United States is the most generous country in the world when it comes to legal immigration. We naturalize almost a million people a year, which is, I think, part of the secret to our economic success. We see the best and the brightest from all around the world who want to come to America, who want to enjoy the kind of prosperity that Americans enjoy and the freedom and opportunity to pursue their dreams. Legal immigration, I think, has been part of the secret sauce that has helped to make our country great, and we need to protect that.

Illegal immigration is a disaster. What is happening now on the border and what has happened in the last 2 years under the Biden administration has been nothing short of a humanitarian and public safety crisis.

It is a little bit of a disappointment—it is more than a little bit of a disappointment—when President Biden campaigned on the promise of policies that were sure to lead to this exact situation. On the one hand, he said: I want to be a uniter. I want to work together to solve our Nation's problems.

But then to see him completely abdicate the Federal Government's responsibility to control uncontrolled migration across the border is inexcusable. Once President Biden took office, his administration continued to send a clear message to the cartels, to the human smugglers, and to the migrants that our border was open. Oh, and don't forget the drug cartels, who depend on an open border to sell their poison all across our country, taking the lives, last year, of 108,000 Americans alone.

Some people have said: Well, apparently, every State is now a border State.

I think that is true, particularly when you see the epidemic of fentanyl being so pervasive in all of our communities. We are losing students in our high schools on a regular basis who think they are taking something like, let's say, Xanax or Percocet or something else, but it is laced with fentanyl, and it kills them because only a very small piece of fentanyl can take your life. It is that powerful.

Unfortunately, the administration is now trying to play catchup to its failures and abdication to provide security across our southern border. In the last fiscal year, for the first time on record, annual border encounters reached nearly 2.4 million. When I say border encounters, that does not count the so-called getaways, which is what the Border Patrol calls them—the hundreds and thousands of people who don't turn themselves in and claim asylum. These are people who want to evade law enforcement. They are very likely involved in either criminal activity or have a criminal record themselves or, perhaps, they are just smuggling drugs into the United States. Those are the getaways. So the 2.4 million is a low number for the number of people to have come across the border in the last 2 years, and there is no indication that things are slowing down.

I know Vice President HARRIS—named the border czar for President Biden's administration—when she talks about immigration, she says: Well, we need to get back to the root causes.

She talks to the President of Guatemala or Honduras or El Salvador and says, well, we need to make life better for people there so they don't come here, which is totally ignoring the scope and the gravity of the human smuggling networks that operate internationally.

I mentioned this morning, in the Judiciary Committee, where the Presiding Officer was, too, that the Border Patrol regularly encounters people from as many as 150 different countries. So the fact is the criminal organizations that make money on human smuggling will smuggle you from anywhere in the world, including from countries of particular concern to us when it comes to terrorism, for a price. So, where coming from Central America or Mexico may cost you \$5,000 or \$10,000, if you are coming from Pakistan, Iraq, or Iran, it may cost you \$15,000, and it goes on and on and on and on.

So Vice President HARRIS, apparently, doesn't understand what we are up against when she talks about root causes. People want to come here, and they will pay to come here and to evade a lawful system of controlled legal immigration, which, as I said, has been a good thing for our country, in favor of transnational criminal organizations getting richer by the day by